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Scopus 18: 124–126, December 1994

Received 12 December 1994

Is the Blue Cuckoo Shrike *Coracina azurea* in East Africa?

Keith *et al.* (1992) refer to the Blue Cuckoo Shrike *Coracina azurea* as “truly unmistakable... not only unlike any other cuckoo-shrike but unlike any other forest bird in Africa.” This applies to both sexes when seen well. The sole evidence for this lowland forest species in East Africa is an extralimital site record made sometime in the late 1970s in the Mafuga Forest Reserve (1°03'S, 29°52'E), southwestern Uganda (Britton 1980, Keith *et al.* 1992). Unfortunately, Britton (1980) does not provide any details surrounding this record or give the name of the person who actually made the sighting. The purpose of this note is to question whether *C. azurea* should continue to be listed as an East African species.

C. azurea is a bird of the canopy of primary and secondary lowland forests. In eastern Zaïre it has not been observed above 1190 m a.s.l. (Chapin 1953, Keith *et al.* 1992). Except for the Mafuga Forest sighting, it is not known to range farther east than the Semliki Forest of eastern Zaïre, or to be present in any of the other forests of the Albertine Rift Afromontane Region.

The Mafuga Forest (2000–2500 m a.s.l.) is roughly 100–200 km east of the normal range for *C. azurea*. It is the largest plantation of softwood/exotic trees in Uganda, covering an area of about 40 km². The dominant species are *Pinus patula* and *Cupressus lusitanicus*. *Pinus radiata* and *Eucalyptus* spp. are also present. The only natural vegetation remaining is the secondary forest found in a few of the firebreaks and approximately 1 km² of remnant forest which is variable, patchy in structure, and largely confined to the valley bottoms (Francis & Penford 1991, pers. observ.).

In 1991, Francis and Penford (1991, 1993) spent four days (58 observer hours) surveying the birds of Mafuga Forest. They recorded 85 species but did not see *C. azurea*. It should be noted, however, that they were unable to spend much time in natural vegetation types. Mafuga Forest lies only 4 km from the eastern edge of the Bwindi-Impenetrable Forest National Park (331 km²). These two forests were probably part of a much larger forest block until early this century (Butynski 1984). It is surprising that *C. azurea* would be present in the Mafuga Forest but absent from the nearby Impenetrable Forest with its much greater area and altitudinal range (1400–2600 m a.s.l.), and lower level of habitat disturbance. Dr Jan Kalina and I are familiar with *C. azurea* having observed it in the Ituri Forest, Zaïre. From 1984 through 1993

we undertook thousands of hours of bird research and other field work throughout the Impenetrable Forest without observing *C. azurea*. If this species is in the Impenetrable Forest, the place where it is most likely to occur is in the lowland forest along the lowest reaches of the Ishasha River Gorge in the extreme northern part of the forest.

C. azurea appears to be absent not only from the Impenetrable Forest (Kalina & Butynski in press), but also from other large, lower-lying, reasonably well-studied, forests between Mafuga and the lowland forests of eastern Zaïre. These include the Kibale, Maramagambo and Kalinzu Forests (Friedmann 1966, Friedmann & Williams 1970, Britton 1980, Francis & Penford 1993).

I suggest that *C. azurea* be considered for omission from the East Africa bird list for the following reasons:

1. the one sighting was made at least 15 years ago and has not been substantiated by either a collected bird or additional sight records;
2. Mafuga Forest is unlikely habitat for supporting a population of this species;
3. *C. azurea* is apparently absent from all other Uganda forests even though several of them are larger, closer to *C. azurea* populations in Zaïre, and have habitats far more suitable for this species.

As noted above, the confirmed eastern limit of *C. azurea* is the Semliki Forest of eastern Zaïre. A spur of the Semliki Forest, the Bwamba Forest, extends into Uganda just north of the Rwenzori Mountains. This is the lowest forest in Uganda (740–1000 m) and, as such, is the only locality in East Africa for many bird species. About six species new to East Africa have been found in Bwamba in the past four years (e.g., Ash *et al.* 1991). Bird expeditions to Bwamba should be on the look-out for *C. azurea* as Bwamba is the most likely East Africa forest for this species.

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Scopus 18: 126–128, December 1994

Received 12 December 1994

Hamerkop *Scopus umbretta* on Kilimanjaro

I saw a Hamerkop *Scopus umbretta* at about 18:00 on 5 September 1993 at a muddy stream on the Shira Plateau of Kilimanjaro at an altitude of approximately 3600 m. I can trace no record of the species at a similar altitude; Cordeiro (1994) records it at 2100 m at Lendorosi on the western slope of the mountain and I have often seen Hamerkops at 2000 m on the northern slopes. My previous observations relate to a small bog derived from the overflow of a piped water source and both *Xenopus* and *Rana*, presumed prey items, were abundant. The muddy stream on the Shira Plateau also harboured a population of *Rana*.

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Scopus 18: 128, December 1994

Received 18 May 1994

Lyre-tailed Honeyguide *Melichneutes robustus* and Grey Ground Thrush *Zoothera princei batesi*: new records for Uganda

The Semliki (Bwamba) Forest Reserve (0°52'N, 30°05'E) in western Uganda is separated by the 20-m wide Semliki River from the Ituri Forest of eastern Zaïre. Over 60 per cent of Uganda's forest bird species are found in the Semliki Reserve (Howard 1991) and several new birds for the country have recently been recorded from it (Ash *et al.* 1991). It contains a number of species whose status has given rise to concern, for example Nahan's Francolin *Francolinus nahani* and the Forest Ground Thrush *Zoothera oberlaenderi* (Collar *et al.* 1994). During field work in the Semliki in 1992, I recorded the following two species.

Lyre-tailed Honeyguide *Melichneutes robustus*

Britton (1980) included this species for Uganda, but in square brackets, noting "Although this species has not been positively recorded from Uganda, its unique and unmistakable call has been reported from Bwamba Forest where it can be expected to